

THE ART OF WARLI: AN ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABLE APPROACH IN THE PATTERN AND DESIGN

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Abstract

The art and sustainability is always connected together. The folk and tribal arts are the harbinger of sustaining the environmental practices. The folk and tribal Arts of India have a rich cultural lineage with the advancement of nature. The art of Warli, an art of international repute, is full of nature and depicts the celebration of life with natural bliss. The pattern and motifs are having the application of flora and fauna which is Indigenous and natural in its organic form. The paper seeks to explore the art of Warli in the connection of sustainable approach. The art can be revisited and explored through the perspective of ecology and nature. The daily life activities showcased the fusion of nature with the application of trees, animals etc. The study will also represent a comparative study of traditional and contemporary methods of Warli as the contemporary forms of expressions are giving a strong message towards the changing scenario of surroundings and society. The study will be based on an assessment of the tribal art of Warli where some artworks of traditional and contemporary style will be evaluated.

Keywords: Warli, tribal art, geometry and art, folk art and ecology, flora and fauna and sustainability.

1. Introduction

The art of Warli is having the amalgamation of nature and day to day life. The traditional art of Warli is also created through the natural resources which are directly and indirectly giving a support towards environmental practices. From the ancient time, the folk and tribal arts are solely depending upon the nature and the colour is usually extracted through natural pigments. From the remote past, the traditional and folk artists have also adopted a synthetic colour which is very harmful for the environment. The synthetic colours are also not good for the artists as well. Additionally, the organic colours also have long-lasting quality because of its organic nature. The art of Warli is usually created with white and red colours. For red, red oxide is being used and for white rice has been used for the surface. Even, the traditional forms of Warli can only be seen in the mud walls of traditional houses of Warli people. The houses of mud are also beneficial for the living and not harmful for the environment as well. The sustainable approach can be seen in the traditional housing system as well. The art of Warli is not creating its sustainable approach through the material and surface but its forms and patterns can also be seen as creating the same sense. **Sustainability and Art of Warli**

The art of Warli has this unique combination of nature and creativity. The patterns and motifs are highly traditional and ecological as well.



Fig.1 The Art of Warli, Source:

<https://strandofsilk.com/indian-fashion-blog/driven-curiosity/exploring-warli-art-maharashtra-origins-and-contemporary-uses>

Numerous artworks of Warli showcase the spirit of motherhood the divine attribute of nature where we can have a glimpse of vegetation, flora and fauna and a beautiful amalgamation of geometry. First of all the harmony and balance which is created through the incarnation of geometry is indicating the divine balance of nature. In this divine balance the basic approach is reverberated through geometry in the essence of nature. In the above mentioned image, the rectangle and triangle forms with straight lines are representing the very phenomenon of geometry. In all the natural composition, the geometry is dominant. The artisans of Warli play with the symphony of geometry with their exclusive style. The repetitive patterns also indicate the flow of nature which is repetitive and balanced through same appearance. Even in the flow of river, one can find a geometrical flow of straight lines which is taking curves after a wonderful flow. The combination of zig-zag lines are also making it more versatile and unique as geometry is taking a shape through the fusion of the same. The circles are representing the universe and the equilibrium of nature. The perfect incarnation of aesthetical approach can also be found in the application of geometrical and non-geometrical patterns.

The art of Warli provides a major insight of the living style and belief of Warli people. In the traditional Warli art, the geometrical patterns are inspired from ritualistic depictions, celebrations, natural elements, daily life depiction so on and on. Contrary to it, the contemporary patterns are showing industrialization, modern elements, urban houses etc. which can be seen in the works of selected artists. The studies claim its origin from the ancient times, and some indicated these forms are having resemblance with the rock paintings of prehistoric times. Even it was assumed that Warli might be existing from the pre-historic times, but the traces of its origin can be found from 10th century (Dalmia, 1998). The motif of traditional Warli was to decorate the houses for ceremonies but some of the artists of recent times are also doing marketing of their forms. The commercialization provides both opportunity and threats because of its demand and need (Ekta & et al., 2014). Henceforth, it is very important to study such application to explore and suggest a way to minimize the threat. These are some artists who have develop the art of Warli into a great extent, so it is also necessary to evaluate the artworks of such artists. The artist Jivya Soma Mashe (1934-2018), an awardee of Padma Shri (in 2011) and Shilpa Guru (in 2002), was a genius who explored the art of Warli and took this art into international markets.

When it is related with sustainability, it is all the time a comprehensive approach but colour and the colour red or terracotta red creates a unique temperament. This earthen red is the colour of the earth and it also signifies the bliss of Mother Nature. The very boon which is inherited in the symphony of nature is there in the visual composition of the colour. The colour gives so many reminders of sustainability at a single glance. It is related

with worship, auspiciousness, birth and death too. Whenever, the old natural bliss is celebrated, it is mostly celebrated through the harmony of colour red. If the red is used in such compositions, first of all, it produced an organic value, and it also showcases the treasure of natural resources. It creates no harms to the environment and also beneficial for the artist as well. The colour white is also taken from the naturally found pigment so it is again giving a reminder of the same natural bliss which is available. The colour red and white also considered as a symbol of purity too.

Apart from the colour significance, the art of Warli showcases the celebration of nature in which the relationship of human beings has been beautifully projected in the forms. Some of the narratives depict the scenes of village life and day to day process. This process includes personification of life with the advancement of nature. Even in the modern patterns of Warli, these traditional life patterns are disappearing and only the geometrical and repetitive patterns are there.

The depiction of natural trees also indicates the relationship of human-beings with nature. In traditional system, the dependency of human beings on natural elements can be seen. As per the study, the organic value was very much celebrated during the origin of such folk and tribal art practices. It was opined that the nomadic primitive people have shared a common cultural heritage as per their oral traditions and had a folk culture (Mode & Chandra, 1985). Yashodhara Dalmia opined in her book "The Painted Worlds of Warlis" (1988) that the art of Warli is ancient and this tradition can be traced back to 2500 or 3000 BCE. The mural paintings are like those done between 500 and 10,000 BCE in the rock shelter of Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh). She opined so because of the linear patterns, natural pigments, and daily life depiction. Dalmia opined that "the art of Warlis at any rate seems to belong to the phase classified as Neolithic in the rock painting of Central India". It was further added that the people of Warli tribe have a language that is a combination of Sanskrit, Marathi, Gujrati and Hindi words. For instance, the words like Dhartari or Dharitri (earth, Gayatri (cow), Sura (liquor), Maniya (Man) and Pawana (wind) are having resemblance to all such languages. Apart from these, they also use words like Valuk (cucumber), Vepar (to cook), Lisan (ladder), Bahara (broom), and Lothi (young girl). (Dalmia, 1988).

2. Conclusion

The art of Warli is highly celebrated through the sustainable approach and an evident of the ongoing relationship of human beings with nature. The traditional patterns of Warli are highly decorated and showcased through the amalgamation of geometry. Geometry is related solely with the traditional system of being dependent on nature. The abstract forms and patterns are a living example of this utmost symphony of nature. Contrary to it, the contemporary artists are shifting away from this approach which is not appropriate in regards of sustainable approach. The artist of modern times are also experimenting with colours and synthetic pigments are used now a days on the place of natural ones that is against the sustainable approach.

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